Charles X polish War

Charles X left Sweden to engage in a war against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 1655 - 1660

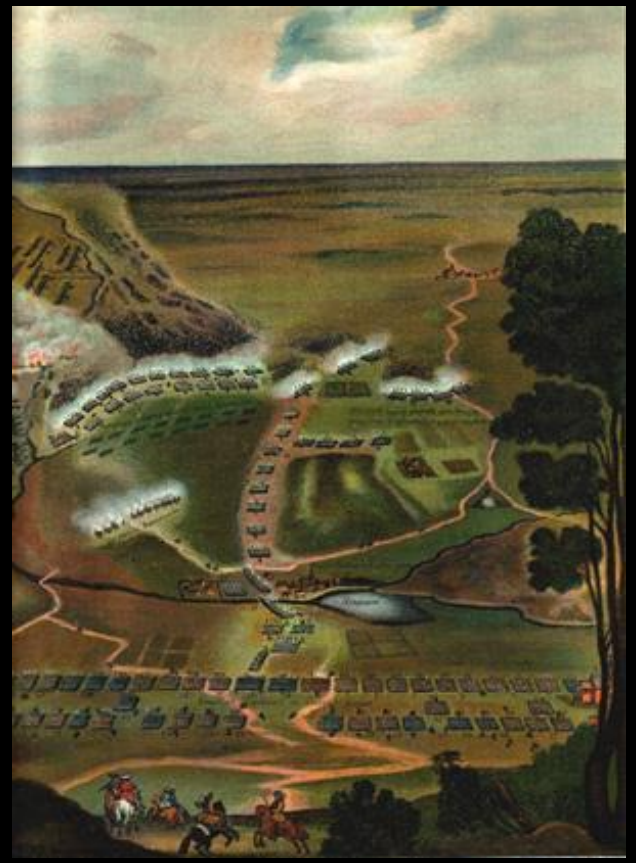
On 10 July 1655, Charles X left Sweden to engage in a war against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in what became the Second (or Little) Northern War (1655–1660). By the time war was declared he had at his disposal 50,000 men and 50 warships. Hostilities had already begun with the occupation of Dünaburg in Polish Livonia by the Swedes on 1 July 1655. Then on 21 July 1655 Swedish army under Arvid Wittenberg crossed into Poland and proceeded towards the encampment of the Greater Poland Levy of the Nobility (pospolite ruszenie) encamped among the banks of the Noteć river, with some regular infantry for support. On 25 July the Polish noble levy army capitulated, and the voivodeships of Poznań and Kalisz placed themselves under the protection of the Swedish King. Thereupon the Swedes entered Warsaw without opposition and occupied the whole of Greater Poland. The Polish king, John II Casimir of Poland (1648–68) of the House of Vasa, eventually fled to Silesia after his armies had suffered defeats. A great number of Polish nobles and their personal armies joined the Swedes, including the majority of the famous Winged Hussars. Many Poles saw Charles X Gustav as a strong monarch who could be a more effective leader than John II Casimir.

Charles X Gustav pressed on towards Kraków

Meanwhile, Charles X Gustav pressed on towards Kraków, which the Swedes captured after a two months' siege. The fall of Kraków followed a capitulation of the Polish Royal armies, but before the end of the year a reaction began in Poland herself. On 18 November 1655 the Swedes invested the fortress-monastery of Częstochowa, but the Poles defended it and after a seventy days' siege the Swedish besiegers had to retire with great loss. This success elicited popular enthusiasm in Poland and gave rise to a nationalistic and religious rhetoric concerning the war and Charles X. He was depicted as tactless and his mercenaries barbaric. His refusal to legalize his position by summoning the Polish diet and his negotiations for the partition of the very state he affected to befriend, awoke a nationalistic spirit in the country.

Triumph of Charles X Gustavus over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (c. 1655), National Museum in Warsaw

Battle of Kłecko (known also as battle of Gniezno)



The Battle of Kłecko was fought on May 7, 1656, between forces of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth commanded by Regimentarz Stefan Czarniecki and Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski and a Swedish force commanded by prince Adolf Johan av Pfalz-Zweibrücken. The Polish–Lithuanian force was more than 12,000 strong and consisted mostly of cavalry, while the Swedes numbered around 7,000 artillery, infantry and cavalry. The Swedes achieved a tactical victory in that they escaped destruction by the Poles, who were unable to get to the Swedish army entrenched behind the Welnianka River, and various ditches and swamps. Swedish army lost 428 dead, while the Polish army sustained 70 dead and wounded, 2,000 dead or 3,000 dead (depending on sources), including 40 companions dead (both hetman Czarniecki and Polish hussar companion Kochowski (who was fighting in this battle) quote this number of Polish losses).

Charles X Wars in Poland

In the beginning of 1656 King John II Casimir returned from exile and the reorganised Polish army, increased in numbers. By this time Charles had discovered that he could more readily defeat the Poles than conquer Poland. What is described as his chief object, the conquest of Prussia, remained unaccomplished, and a new Swedish adversary arose in the elector of Brandenburg, Frederick William I, alarmed by the ambition of the Swedish king. Charles forced the elector, albeit at the point of the sword, to become his ally and vassal (Treaty of Königsberg, 17 January 1656); but the Polish national rising now imperatively demanded his presence in the south. For weeks he engaged in the pursuit of Polish divisions engaged in guerrilla tactics in the snow-covered plains of Poland, penetrating as far south as Jarosław in Ruthenian Voivodeship (województwo ruskie), by which time he had lost two-thirds of his 15,000 men army with no apparent result. In the meantime, the Russians signed a cease-fire with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Treaty of Vilno of 1656) and then pursued a campaign in Livonia and laid siege to Riga, the second largest city in the Swedish Realm.

Charles's retreat from Jarosław to Warsaw almost ended with disaster, for he returned with the fragments of his host, for his army was trapped by the Polish-Lithuanian armies – amidst three converging armies, in a marshy forest region intersected in every direction by well-guarded rivers – is considered one of his most brilliant achievements. But on 21 June 1656 the Poles retook Warsaw, and four days later Charles was obliged to purchase the assistance of Frederick William I, by the treaty of Marienburg (23 June 1656). On 28–30 July the combined Swedes and Brandenburgers, 18,000 strong, after a three days' battle, defeated John Casimir's army of 40,000 at Warsaw, however the Polish-Lithuanian forces promptly withdrew with no large losses and apparent strong will to fight another day, while Swedish host reoccupied the Polish capital again, causing much destruction to the city and its inhabitants. However, this feat of arms did not have the desired result for Charles, and when Frederick William compelled the Swedish king to open negotiations with the Poles, they refused the terms offered, the war resumed, and Charles concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with the elector of Brandenburg (Treaty of Labiau, 20 November 1656) which stipulated that Frederick William and his heirs should henceforth possess the full sovereignty of East Prussia.

Background

In the spring of 1656, Hetmans Stefan Czarniecki and Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski were sent with their forces to Greater Poland, in order to support anti-Swedish insurrection, which had begun there. King Charles X Gustav, who had just managed to escape encirclement in the confluence of the Vistula and the San river, decided to head to Greater Poland, with 10,000 soldiers.

Charles Gustav left Warsaw on April 17, 1656, reaching Pakość on April 28. There, he split his forces into two groups. The King himself left with 2,000 soldiers towards the besieged Gdańsk, while the remaining 8,000 under Gustav' brother, Adolph John I, Count Palatine of Kleeburg, continued to chase the Poles.

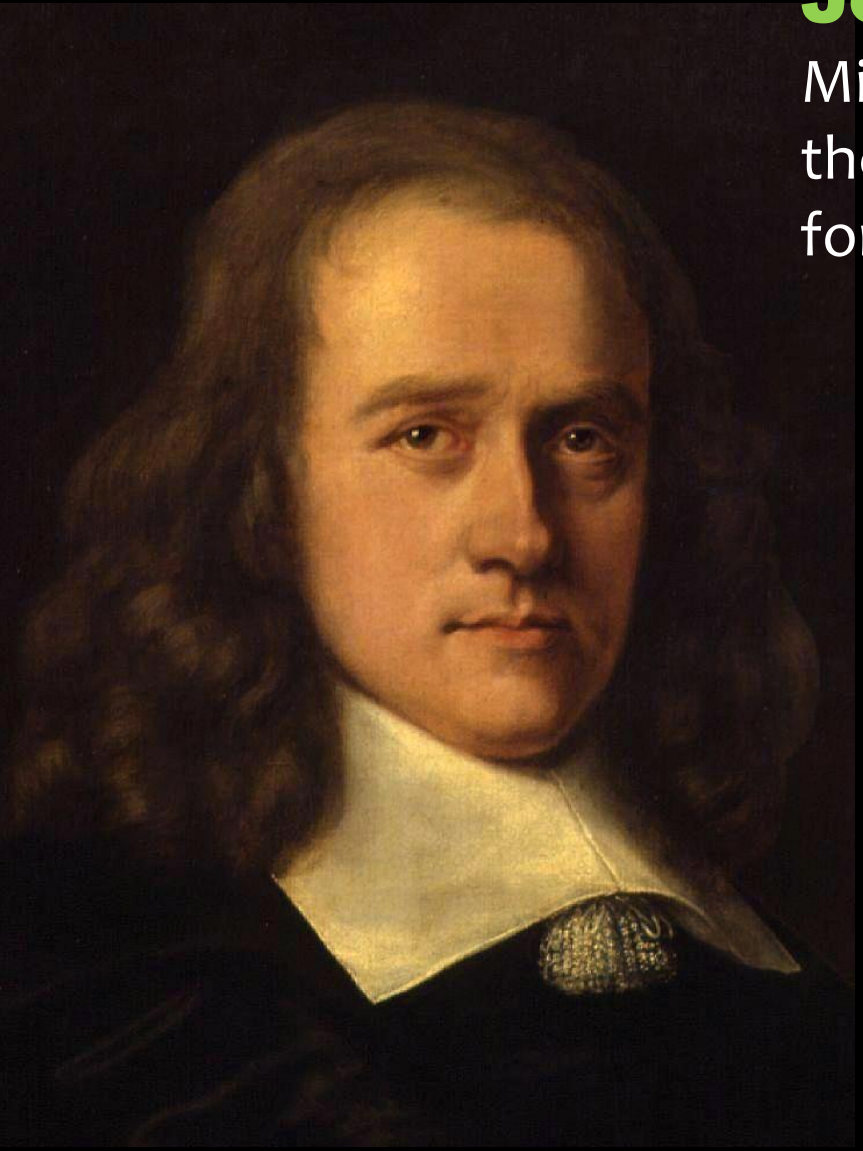
Polish army, which camped along northern bank of the Noteć river, concentrated on May 3 in Pila. On the next day, the Poles crossed the Noteć near Ujście, and marched towards Oborniki Wielkopolskie. After bypassing Poznań, the Poles reached Gniezno (May 5), while on the next day, Adolph John with his army arrived at the village of Jablkowo near Kłecko, 15 kilometers northeast of Gniezno. When news of Charles Gustav's departure to Royal Prussia reached Polish commandants, they decided to face the Swedes in an open field.

The battle

Polish army had 12,000 soldiers, mostly cavalry, while Swedes had 7,000 men with strong artillery units. According to the battle plan of Czarniecki, two Polish cavalry regiments (under Mariusz Stanislaw Jaskolski and Jacek Szemberk) were to engage the Swedes on a dike across a swampy stream called Welnianka, near the village of Brzozogaj. The dike was a trap, behind which four experienced Polish regiments awaited the enemy.

The Plan

The plan initially was a success, as after an exchange of fire, the Poles organized a mock retreat towards the dike. Swedish soldiers began to chase them, but the trap failed, when the four awaiting regiments entered the fray too soon. The Swedes retreated to their well-prepared positions, preventing the destruction of their army. Due to strong Swedish fire, the Poles did not attack their camp, and the battle ended after five hours. According to the Swedish description of the battle, the Polish forces were chased out and pursued. The Polish losses in the battle are highly disputed: Stefan Czarniecki, the Polish commander, claimed he had sustained about 70 dead and wounded



John Thurloe (June 1616 – 21 February 1668) of Great Milton in Oxfordshire and of Lincoln's Inn, was a secretary to the council of state in Protectorate England and spymaster for Oliver Cromwell.

John Thurloe, secretary to the council of state in England, wrote about 600 killed in the battle itself, with another 1,400 more killed during the pursuit. German historian Samuel von Pufendorf made a similar estimation of 600 killed on the field, but with as many as 2,500 killed during the pursuit. 21 Polish standards were also lost. The Swedish losses in the battle were about 428 killed, and perhaps twice as many, or more, wounded

Battle of Kłecko aftermath

The battle once again confirmed the notion that Polish cavalry was unable to defeat well-positioned Swedish infantry. Czarniecki himself later admitted, that without infantry and artillery, it was impossible to win battles with Swedish forces.

After the battle, Polish army marched towards Pleszew and Uniejów, where it camped on May 16. The situation of Swedes deteriorated, as by the end of May, Poles recaptured **Leszno, Kościan and Sieradz.**

The golden era of Leszno ended during the Second Northern War, when the town was burnt down on 28 April 1656. Quickly rebuilt afterwards, it was again set on fire during the Great Northern War by Russian forces in 1707 and was ravaged by plague in 1709.

Town Hall in Leszno

Kościan is a town on the Obra canal in west-central Poland, with a population of 23 952 inhabitants as of June 2014. Situated in the Greater Poland

Sieradz is a town on the Warta river in central Poland with 42,762 inhabitants (2016)
In 1445 the election of King Casimir IV Jagiellon took place at this town. Until the 16th century the town used to be important trade centre. Merchants from Spain & Portugal were frequently visiting the town for Trade and commerce. In the 17th century due to the Swedish wars, plagues, fires and floods the town lost its trading importance and fell from its prime. In the 18th century the reconstruction of town commenced.